

Background and Meaning

Al-Takwir places scenes of the Resurrection beside a strong affirmation of the truth and trustworthiness of revelation. Ibn Kathir explains the opening events as the conditions under which every soul will know what it has brought forward. The later passages identify the noble angelic messenger as Jibril, affirm the Prophet's ﷺ truthful conveyance and call people to take the Qur'an as their guide. The parent should connect these two parts: the revelation warning of the final account is itself a true reminder from the Lord of all worlds.

Tafsir of the Surah

Ayat 1–6: The familiar world overturned. Ibn Kathir explains the folding of the sun through the ending of its light, the scattering of the stars and the moving of the mountains. Precious pregnant camels are left unattended because the overwhelming event occupies their owners. Wild creatures are gathered. He records early explanations of the seas being set ablaze or undergoing tremendous change. The imagery shows that even things people considered secure or valuable cannot remain their chief concern when the Resurrection begins.

Ayat 7–14: Every deed brought forward. Ibn Kathir favours the explanation of souls being paired as people gathered with those of similar deeds and outcomes. The girl buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed, exposing the guilt of her killer through the innocence of his victim. Records are opened, the sky is removed, the Fire is kindled and Paradise is brought near. Every soul then knows the good and evil it has brought. Nothing in the upheaval causes the individual account to be lost.

Ayat 15–18: Signs of movement and change. Ibn Kathir records explanations of the retreating, running and disappearing ones as stars, as well as interpretations referring to wild animals withdrawing to shelter. He discusses the night's arrival and departure as meanings carried by the wording and favours its arrival here, followed by the morning becoming bright. These oaths introduce the affirmation of revelation, directing attention to signs of the Lord's ordering of creation.



Tafsir of the Surah • Continued

Ayat 19–23: The trustworthy messengers. Ibn Kathir identifies the noble messenger in this passage as Jibril, who conveys revelation from Allah. He is strong, honoured with the Lord of the Throne, obeyed among the angels and trustworthy. The surah then defends the human Messenger ﷺ against the accusation of madness. Ibn Kathir explains the sighting on the clear horizon as the Prophet seeing Jibril in the form in which Allah created him. The passage affirms the reliability of the message's conveyance.

Ayat 24–25: Revelation faithfully shared. Ibn Kathir records the established readings concerning being neither withholding with the unseen revelation nor accused of dishonesty concerning it. Their meanings both affirm the Prophet's ﷺ faithful delivery. He conveyed the Qur'an openly to those who sought it. The message is not the speech of an accursed devil; the devils neither carry this revelation nor possess the ability to produce its divine guidance.

Ayat 26–29: A reminder and the will to be upright. Ibn Kathir explains the question about where people are going as a challenge to turning away from the clear Qur'an. It is a reminder for all people and guidance for whoever seeks uprightness. The final ayah places human willing beneath the will of Allah, Lord of all worlds. The invitation to respond is real, while guidance and the ability to follow it remain dependent upon the Lord.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

١

Memorised

When the sun is rolled up.

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ

٢

Memorised

When the stars are dimmed.

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ

٣

Memorised

When the mountains are set in motion.

وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ

٤

Memorised

When the relationships are suspended.

وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ

٥

Memorised

When the beasts are gathered.

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ

٦

Memorised

When the oceans are set aflame.



Memorisation · Continued

وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ


☐ Memorised

When the souls are paired.

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ


☐ Memorised

When the girl, buried alive, is asked:

بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ


☐ Memorised

For what crime was she killed?

وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ


☐ Memorised

When the records are made public.

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ


☐ Memorised

When the sky is peeled away.

وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُعِرَتْ


☐ Memorised

When the Fire is set ablaze.



Memorisation · Continued

وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ أُزْلِفَتْ

١٣

Memorised

When Paradise is brought near.

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ

١٤

Memorised

Each soul will know what it has readied.

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْخَنَسِ

١٥

Memorised

I swear by the galaxies.

الْجَوَارِ الْكُنَسِ

١٦

Memorised

Precisely running their courses.

وَالَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ

١٧

Memorised

And by the night as it recedes.

وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ

١٨

Memorised

And by the morn as it breathes.



Memorisation · Continued

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ

١٩

Memorised

This is the speech of a noble messenger.

ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ

٢٠

Memorised

Endowed with power, eminent with the Lord of the Throne.

مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ

٢١

Memorised

Obeyed and honest.

وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُونٍ

٢٢

Memorised

Your friend is not possessed.

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالْأَفْقِ الْمُبِينِ

٢٣

Memorised

He saw him on the luminous horizon.

وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ

٢٤

Memorised

And he does not withhold knowledge of the Unseen.



Memorisation · Continued

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَّجِيمٍ

٢٥

Memorised

And it is not the word of an accursed devil.

فَأَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ

٢٦

Memorised

So where are you heading?

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ

٢٧

Memorised

It is only a Reminder to all mankind.

لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَسْتَقِيمَ

٢٨

Memorised

To whoever of you wills to go straight.

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ
الْعَالَمِينَ

٢٩

Memorised

But you cannot will, unless Allah wills—the Lord of the Worlds.

Parent tafsir: adapted from Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, 81:1–29.

Arabic commentary: quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura81-aya1.html

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